Silver State KIDS

(Kindergarten Inventory of Development Statewide)

Implementing an Assessment at Kindergarten Entry and Coordinating an Early Childhood Data System.

Q. What is Silver State KIDS?

A. This project is a statewide effort to build a comprehensive ECE system that supports the ability of all children in Nevada to enter kindergarten ready to learn. The Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council, (NECAC) managed by Nevada's Head Start Collaboration and Early Childhood Systems (HSC&ECS) Office, in collaboration with the Nevada Department of Education (NDE), is leading this effort, which has identified two major components of system change as priorities for implementation:

a) Adoption of a common Kindergarten Inventory of Development statewide (Silver State KIDS) that measures each child's developmental status upon entering kindergarten; and

b) The development of a coordinated data system that aligns Pre-K to K-12 data (and beyond) will improve understanding about which ECE policies, strategies, services and supports are the most likely to improve school readiness. This will facilitate expansion and replication of effective and proven ECE practices throughout Nevada.

A major component of Silver State KIDS is the use of a valid and reliable, observation-based assessment that is completed within the first six weeks of kindergarten to provide information about what entering children know and can do.

Q. Has an assessment tool been identified?

A. Yes. Teaching Strategies GOLD® (GOLD®) is an observation-based assessment that measures multiple domains of learning. It is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. GOLD® has been designed for this purpose, is currently used by a number of states, and is being piloted for Silver State KIDS based on the requirements identified through the statewide needs assessment.

Q. What is the timeline for the entire project?

A. Silver State KIDS is intended to be completed in phases. Phasing means that some districts will be early adopters, with training to take place in Fall 2013. These districts will be important in shaping the implementation of Silver State KIDS, and provide feedback to improve the process through participation in evaluation activities. Phase II is envisioned to occur during school year 2014-15 when funding for all districts to participate in Silver State KIDS will be available. Senate Bill 486 provides funding for the biennium (2013-2015).

Q. When do we assess?

A. Observations for Silver State KIDS will take place during the first several (4-6) weeks of school using GOLD® and no later than 10/08/2014. Data entry and final ratings for children entering kindergarten must be completed no later than 10/30/2014 in order to be included in the 14-15 Kindergarten Inventory of Development Statewide (KIDS) report. However, GOLD® can be used to measure children's progress along the developmental and skill continuum up to four times per year. Programs serving children birth to age five can enter data throughout the year, up to four times.

Q. How is the data going to be used for Silver State KIDS?

A. The data can and may be used at the local and state level to do the following:

- Provide information to inform instruction and intentionality;
- Improve understanding about what parents and communities can do, beginning at birth, to help children become school-ready;
- Identify students who would benefit from further screening, intervention and other specialized services; and
- Inform local and state policy and program improvement decisions.

Q. What is meant by observation-based?

A. Teachers make observations of students over a period of days or weeks, and collect documentation that supports these observations. The information is then entered by the teacher into a data system that allows reporting on the child's knowledge and skills as they relate to specific objectives. This authentic assessment (observation of the child) is developmentally appropriate, gives the teacher valuable information that can be used to shape and inform instruction, and is more likely to capture what a young child can do (compared to other types of standardized testing).

Q. What will our district gain through early participation in Silver State KIDS?

A. Participants will gain actionable data through specific reports developed for teachers, parents, and administrators. Activities are available for teachers to inform instruction and support assessment. The assessment includes a dedicated family portal that strengthens and simplifies communication with families. Schools can determine whether to complete ongoing formative assessments throughout the year, providing information for teachers about how children have progressed.

Q. How does this assessment support dual-language learners?

A. The assessment is fully bilingual, with content for teachers available in both English and Spanish. Many objectives are not language dependent. English language acquisition objectives can be used to assess progress in acquiring any second language. A Home Language Survey helps teachers gather information about the language children use at home and in school, to determine if the teacher needs to use the English Language Acquisition objectives. The assessment also includes Spanish language and literacy objectives, which should be used when children are instructed and assessed in Spanish. Assessing learning in both languages helps to provide a more complete profile of a child's development.

Q. Is the data reliable?

A. In addition to in-person training on reliability, teachers can complete an inter-rater reliability certification online (from any computer). To accomplish this, ratings of children's developmental levels are compared with the master ratings of GOLD® master raters. Once teachers have reached agreement of at least 80% with master ratings, teachers receive a certificate for achieving reliability.

Q. Is assessment valuable if it is completed only at the beginning of the year?

A. Completing assessment in GOLD® for Silver State KIDS at the beginning of the year supports statewide data collection and provides information on the skills and knowledge that Nevada's children have when they enter kindergarten. Information from the assessment can be used to inform instruction. The assessment can also be completed at up to 3 additional time points during the year at no additional costs. This decision-- of whether and when to reassess--can be made at the district or even school / teacher level and is highly recommended in order to identify the child progress that has been made throughout the year.

Q. Who completes the assessment? Will our schools need to hire additional staff?

A. Silver State KIDS needs to be completed by teachers. Only the teacher can complete the assessment online, but aids and other teachers can help to collect the documentation for scoring. This is to protect the reliability and validity of the data. Substitutes and aids are not expected to be needed for assessment; however, teachers will need to be able to devote time at a computer to complete the assessments by the end of the second month of school. Reports are available to teachers immediately after data is entered.

Q. Does this assessment align to preschool?

A. GOLD® offers assessment birth through kindergarten. The assessment has been aligned to the Nevada Pre-K standards. Many programs already use GOLD® in preschool. As funding is available new early education and care providers may be invited to participate. Connecting data from preschool to K-12 and beyond is an important long-term goal of Silver State KIDS. Schools can support further alignment, for example, holding transition meetings.

Q. How does this assessment link to Grades 1, 2 and 3?

A. Alignment to the Common Core State Standards and integration into the state data system are the ways in which Silver State KIDS connects to primary grades. Schools can support further alignment, for example, holding transition meetings.

Using the tool in the classroom in the 2014-15 school year

Q. How do I get my login?

A. The assigned person as your school or district can add you into GOLD®, as well as your classes according to their protocol. You will then receive an e-mail with a username and temporary password. (Please check your junk folder in e-mail to make sure the automated message was not accidentally filtered.) You will then be able to log in, access your classes and children.

Q. How do I get trained on the assessment?

A. There are individuals across the state who have completed the Accreditation Program for Trainers and can train or provide continued technical assistance as you familiarize yourself with Teaching Strategies GOLD®. To arrange on-site training please contact Tammie Williams at tammiewilliams@doe.nv.gov In addition, there is a free online course available when you log in to GOLD®, go to your Dashboard, go to the Professional Development tab and choose Courses. This online training takes 8-12 hours and you receive a certificate of completion of 12 hours after you've completed the training.

Q. How is GOLD® being used for birth through Pre-K?

A. Some programs in the state are already implementing GOLD® as an assessment for birth through Pre-K. Those programs can continue to use GOLD®, and may elect to be a part of the state license if they would like the state to support their use of GOLD®. Participation in the state license also allows their data to be aggregated with state reports and children can eventually be transferred from site to site throughout the state in order to keep all of the rich documentation and data with their profile as they move from class to class.

Q. When do we have to complete the assessment? (birth through Pre-K)

A. Birth through Pre-K programs using GOLD® will need to complete fall assessments by 10/10/2014, winter by 02/23/2015 and spring by 05/15/2015. The absolute last date to enter documentation, for those districts that start the latest, is 10/17/2014 All districts must have fall Checkpoint levels completed by 10/17/2014.

Q. How long is it going to take to complete the assessment?

A. Although this varies based on comfort level with technology, the quality of anecdotal information collected on each child, and familiarity with items in the tool, teachers have reported that completing checkpoint levels at the end of the checkpoint period takes anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes per child to complete (if preliminary levels have been entered with documentation) to 15 to 20 minutes (if preliminary levels have not been entered).

Q. What if I have other assessments or screeners that I use?

A. You can use that information as evidence of the child's knowledge, skills and behaviors when completing your assessment in GOLD®. You can upload it as documentation or keep it in the child's physical portfolio to reference at the end of the checkpoint period.

Q. What is documentation and what am I required to do?

A. Documentation is ongoing, anecdotal observations of a child's knowledge, skills and behaviors. Typically, this encompasses work samples, notes of what the child says or does, photos, videos and audio clips of the child. In GOLD®, you can keep a digital portfolio for each child, inputting notes, photos, videos or audio to store for reference at the end of the checkpoint period. Please note that uploading documentation is not a requirement. Districts can decide whether a physical copy of the child's work samples are kept as long as child is enrolled in class or if a digital copy in GOLD® is required.

Q. Is GOLD® aligned with our standards and Common Core State Standards?

A. Yes. Under the Help section, when you are logged in to GOLD®, you can go to Alignments and find an alignment with Nevada's state standards, Head Start Early Learning Framework, and the Common Core State Standards. You can also run the Alignment report or Snapshot with Alignment report to see how your students are performing compared to any of those standards.

Q. What is the difference between documentation and checkpoint levels?

A. Documentation is ongoing observation of students collected throughout the checkpoint period. It can be in the form of work samples, notes, photos, videos, and audio examples. It can be scored and used to guide the determination of what level a child is at the end of the checkpoint period.

Q. What continuing resources do I have if questions come up throughout the assessment period?

A. Support is available within GOLD® through the self-paced, interactive online Professional Development modules, live and recorded Webinars, and Help resources (PDF and video) embedded with the blue circle "i"s throughout the site and in the Help section. Teaching Strategies is available for technical assistance via telephone (866-736-5913, M-Th: 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET, F: 8 a.m. - 6 p.m. ET) and e-mail ssk@teachingstrategies.com. If you have program specific questions, please contact Tammie Williams, NV Department of Education, at 702.486.6626 and email tammiewilliams@doe.nv.gov.